



WEST VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF STATE

MAC WARNER

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW DIVISION

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Office of West Virginia
Secretary Of State

**NOTICE OF FINAL FILING AND ADOPTION OF A LEGISLATIVE RULE AUTHORIZED
BY THE WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

AGENCY: Health And Human Resources

TITLE-SERIES: 69-10

RULE TYPE: Legislative Amendment to Existing Rule: Yes Repeal of existing rule: No

RULE NAME: West Virginia Clearance for Access: Registry and
Employment Screening

CITE STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16-49-9

The above rule has been authorized by the West Virginia Legislature.

Authorization is cited in (house or senate bill number) 2427

Section (j) Passed On 4/6/2021 12:00:00 AM

This rule is filed with the Secretary of State. This rule becomes effective on the following date:

April 30, 2021

This rule shall terminate and have no further force or effect from the following date:

August 01, 2026

BY CHOOSING 'YES', I ATTEST THAT THE PREVIOUS STATEMENT IS TRUE AND CORRECT.

Yes

April L Robertson -- By my signature, I certify that I am the person authorized to file legislative rules, in accordance with West Virginia Code §29A-3-11 and §39A-3-2.

TITLE 69
LEGISLATIVE RULE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

SERIES 10
WEST VIRGINIA CLEARANCE FOR ACCESS: REGISTRY AND EMPLOYMENT SCREENING

§ 69-10-1. General Provisions.

1.1. Scope. -- It is the purpose of this rule to protect West Virginia's vulnerable population by requiring registry prescreening and state and federal criminal background checks for all direct access personnel of the Department, covered providers, and covered contractors. The short title of this rule shall be known as WV CARES.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §16-49-9.

1.3. Filing Date. -- April 29, 2021.

1.4. Effective Date. -- April 30, 2021.

1.5. Sunset Provision. -- This rule shall terminate and have no further force or effect on August 1, 2026.

1.6. Application. -- This rule applies to the Department, covered providers, and covered contractors as defined in this rule and W. Va. Code §§16-49-1, *et seq.*

1.7. Enforcement. -- This rule is enforced by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources or his or her lawful designee.

§ 69-10-2. Definitions.

2.1. Definitions incorporated by reference. -- Those terms defined in W. Va. Code §§16-49-1, *et seq.*, are incorporated herein by reference.

2.2. Conviction -- means a finding of guilt by a court, a plea of guilty, or *nolo contendere* was accepted, or when the individual entered a first offender, deferred adjudication, or arrangement or program where the judgment of conviction is withheld, regardless of whether an appeal is pending.

2.3. Covered Provider -- means the following facilities or providers that are required to participate in the WV CARES program: skilled nursing facilities; nursing facilities; home health agencies; providers of hospice care; long-term care hospitals; providers of personal care services; providers of adult day care; residential care providers that arrange for or directly provide long-term care services including assisted living facilities; intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities; persons responsible for the care of children as described in W. Va. Code §49-2-114; chronic pain management clinics; behavioral health centers; neonatal abstinence syndrome centers; opioid treatment centers; and any other facility or provider required to participate in the WV CARES program as determined by the secretary in legislative rule.

2.4. Direct On-site Supervision -- means uninterrupted observation of a provisional employee by another employee who has cleared all the required background checks. Provisional employees cannot have direct access without being supervised or observed as required by the provisions of this rule.

2.5. Disqualifying Offense -- means a conviction or substantiated finding for any of the crimes that exclude an applicant from direct access personnel positions in the Department or covered provider, including the conviction of attempt, solicitation, conspiracy, aiding, or abetting the underlying crime. Disqualifying convictions include those crimes enumerated in federal or any state's code and recognized by the West Virginia State Police, and that generally fall within the following categories:

2.5.1. State or federal health and social services program-related crimes;

2.5.2. Patient abuse or neglect;

2.5.3. Health care fraud;

2.5.4. Felony drug crimes;

2.5.5. Crimes against care-dependent or vulnerable individuals;

2.5.6. Felony crimes against the person;

2.5.7. Felony crimes against property;

2.5.8. Sexual offenses;

2.5.9. Felony crimes against chastity, morality and decency;

2.5.10. Felony crimes against public justice;

2.5.11. Felony traffic offenses; and

2.5.12. Felony crimes against the peace.

2.6. Fitness Determination -- means a finding by the Secretary after review of an applicant's criminal history record information that the applicant is either eligible for employment or not.

§ 69-10-3. Prescreening.

3.1. A covered provider or covered contractor shall prescreen all direct access personnel applicants considered for hire for negative findings by way of an internet search of registries and licensure databases through the WV CARES website. The Department shall prescreen all applicants considered for hire for negative findings by way of an internet search of registries and licensure databases through the WV CARES website. The Secretary will charge a \$20 fee for its use.

3.2. A covered provider shall ensure that all covered contractors who provide direct access personnel prescreen their applicants considered for hire for negative findings by way of an internet search of registries and licensure databases through the WV CARES website.

3.3. The Department shall ensure that all covered contractors who provide direct access personnel prescreen their applicants considered for hire for negative findings by way of an internet search of registries and licensure databases through the WV CARES website.

3.4. If the applicant has a negative finding on any required registry or licensure database, the Department, covered provider, or covered contractor shall notify the applicant, in writing, by regular U.S. mail, of such finding and shall not employ that applicant.

§ 69-10-4. Fingerprinting.

4.1. If the applicant does not have a negative finding in the prescreening process, and the Department, covered provider, or covered contractor, if applicable, is considering the applicant for employment, the applicant shall submit to fingerprinting for a state and federal criminal history record information check, and may be employed as a provisional employee subject to the provisions of this rule.

4.2. Applicants considered for hire shall be notified by the hiring entity that their fingerprints will be retained by the State Police Criminal Identification Bureau and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to allow for updates of criminal record information according to applicable standards, rules, regulations or laws. The Secretary will notify employers in writing by regular U.S. mail of subsequent criminal events discovered through rap back, but the affected employee's employment status during the time period between an arrest and either a conviction or a dismissal is a matter of Department or company policy.

4.3. An applicant who has gone through the criminal background check process described by the provisions of this rule, but has not been employed by the Department or covered provider for five years, must submit new fingerprints and obtain a new employment fitness determination from the Secretary.

4.4. After an applicant's fingerprints have been compared with the state and federal criminal history information, the State Police shall notify the Secretary of the results for the purposes of making an employment fitness determination.

§ 69-10-5. Employment Fitness Determination.

5.1. If the Secretary's review of the criminal history record information provided by the State Police reveals the applicant does not have a disqualifying offense, the applicant may be employed.

5.2. If the Secretary's review of the criminal history record information reveals a conviction of a disqualifying offense, the applicant may not be employed, unless a variance has been requested or granted.

5.3. If the Secretary's review of an applicant's criminal history record information reveals a pending charge that has not received a final disposition, the following shall apply:

5.3.1. If the pending charge is a disqualifying misdemeanor offense, and the applicant has not has a conviction for a disqualifying offense in the last seven year, the Secretary will provide written notice to the bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor advising that the applicant is eligible for work.

5.3.2. If the pending charge is a disqualifying felony offense, the Secretary will provide written notice to the bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor advising that the applicant is ineligible for work, unless a variance has been requested or granted.

5.3.3. Once a final disposition has been made on the pending charge, the Secretary will review the criminal history record information de novo in accordance with the provisions of this rule and W. Va. Code §§16-49-1, *et seq.*

5.4. The Secretary will provide written notice by regular U.S. mail of the employment fitness determination to the bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor, if applicable, but shall not disseminate the criminal history record information.

5.5. The bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor, if applicable, shall maintain a copy of the written notice of the eligible fitness determination in the applicant's personnel file.

§ 69-10-6. Provisional Employees.

6.1. Provisional basis employment for no more than 60 days may occur when:

6.1.1. An applicant does not have a negative finding on a required registry or licensure database, and the employment fitness determination is pending the criminal history record information; or

6.1.2. An applicant has requested a variance of the employment fitness determination and that decision is pending.

6.2. All provisional employees shall receive direct, on-site supervision by the bureau or covered provider until an eligible fitness determination is received.

6.3. The provisional employee, pending the employment fitness determination, must affirm, in a signed statement, that he or she has not committed a disqualifying offense, and acknowledge that a disqualifying offense shall constitute good cause for termination. Provisional employees who have requested a variance shall not be required to sign such a statement.

§ 69-10-7. Variance.

7.1. The applicant, or the Department, covered provider, or covered contractor, if applicable, on the applicant's behalf, may file a written request for a variance of the fitness determination with the Secretary.

7.2. The Secretary may grant a variance if mitigating circumstances surrounding the negative finding or disqualifying offense is provided, and the Secretary finds that the individual will not pose a danger or threat to residents or their property, or both.

7.3. Mitigating circumstances may include:

7.3.1. The passage of time. The length of time an applicant is barred from employment in direct access care starts from the date of conviction or the date of release from the penalty imposed, whichever is later.

7.3.2. Extenuating circumstances such as the applicant's age at the time of conviction, substance abuse, or mental health issues.

7.3.3. A demonstration of rehabilitation such as character references, employment history, education, and training.

7.3.4. The relevancy of the particular disqualifying information with respect to the type of employment sought.

7.4. The Secretary will send by regular U.S. mail to the applicant and the bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor, if applicable, a written decision within 60 days of receipt of the request indicating whether a variance has been granted or denied. The individual hiring decision is ultimately the prerogative of each bureau, covered provider, or covered contractor.

§ 69-10-8. Appeals.

8.1. If the applicant believes that his or her criminal history record information within the state of West Virginia is incorrect or incomplete, he or she may challenge the accuracy of such information by writing to the State Police for a personal review.

8.2. If the applicant believes that his or her criminal history record information from outside the state of West Virginia is incorrect or incomplete, he or she may appeal the accuracy of such information by contacting the Federal Bureau of Investigation for instructions.

8.3. If the purported discrepancies are at the charge or final disposition level, the applicant must address this with the court or arresting agency that submitted the record to the State Police.

8.4. The applicant shall not be employed during the appeal process.

§ 69-10-9. Responsibility of the Department, Covered Provider, or Covered Contractor.

9.1. Record Retention. A bureau or covered provider shall maintain the following documents related to the background checks for all direct personnel for the duration of their employment, including:

9.1.1. Documents establishing that an applicant has no negative findings on registries and licensure databases.

9.1.2. The secretary's eligible employment fitness determination;

9.1.3. Any variance granted by the secretary, if applicable; and

9.1.4. For provisional employees, the Department or covered provider shall maintain documentation that establishes that the individual meets the qualifications for provisional employment.

9.2. Except as otherwise permitted by this rule, the Department or covered provider may not employ an applicant, or engage an independent health contractor, prior to completing the background check process.

9.3. Failure of the Department, covered provider, or covered contractor to ensure proper completion of the background check process for each individual employed as direct access personnel may result in the imposition of civil money penalties of \$2,500 per occurrence. Engaging individuals knowing that they

are ineligible to work may subject the employer to civil money penalties of \$2,500 per occurrence. Each civil money penalty will be levied by the Secretary by written notice.

§ 69-10-10. Change in Employment.

10.1. If an individual applies for employment at the Department or a subsequent covered provider or covered contractor, the applicant is not required to submit to fingerprinting and a criminal background check if:

10.1.1. The individual previously submitted to fingerprinting and a full criminal background check as required by this rule;

10.1.2. The prior criminal background check confirmed that the individual did not have a disqualifying offense;

10.1.3. The individual received prior approval from the Secretary to work for or with the Department, covered provider, or independent health contractor, if applicable; and

10.1.4. No new criminal activity that constitutes a disqualifying offense has been reported.

10.2. The Secretary will provide a copy of the employment fitness determination upon request by the Department, or a subsequent covered provider or covered contractor.

§ 69-10-11. Confidentiality and Immunity.

11.1. The Secretary will treat and maintain any criminal background search information obtained under this article as confidential. The Secretary will limit the use of records solely to the purposes authorized by W. Va. Code §§16-49-1, *et seq.* The criminal history record information in the custody of the Secretary is not subject to subpoena, other than one issued in a criminal action or investigation; is confidential by law and privileged; and is not subject to discovery or admissible in evidence in any private civil action.

11.2. The Secretary, the Department, and its employees are immune from liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed for good faith conduct in determining eligibility or granting variances permitted by this rule.